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property gain and no feud; at most somebody in the victim's family had at some time said something derogatory about Hlatam. Quarrelling is socially so strongly disapproved of that people of naturally aggressive temperament probably suffer from considerable psychological discomfort and get some relief from the thought of unrestrained aggression practised by somebody else. I have statements by nine people about Hlatam and her poison, for the subject was rather an uncomfortable one and could only be broached to people I knew well; the three most emphatic about her guilt were potentially aggressive in other ways; those who protested her innocence were themselves gentle. The motive of poison obtained from strangers—plainsmen or Nepali or Tibetans—crops up fairly often in anecdote and legend; but I never heard of the strong aconite arrow-poison, which nearly every man possesses, being employed for illegitimate purposes, though when men commit suicide they usually do so by taking it.

Theft is unusual; it practically never occurs from houses, which, if there is nobody at home, are usually padlocked; but this padlock is in point of fact more a social sign that the house is momentarily unoccupied, than a protection against possible entry. Sometimes indeed the padlock is fastened on to a thin loop of bamboo fibre which could be torn to pieces in the hand; and it would never be difficult to make an entry into a Lepcha house through the bamboo floor or walls. A few cases occurred about four years ago of cardamum fruit being stolen off the plants in the field, but there have been no instances of this in the last three years. If a theft is witnessed the robbed person goes and informs the Mandal who then consults with the *youmi*; then the Mandal and *youmi* go to the thief and try their utmost to persuade him to restore the stolen property; if he does so he is given a severe talking to and the incident is considered closed. Should he refuse, however, and should there be clear evidence against him, the matter would be reported to Gangtok; such a course is to be deplored and in fact has not occurred within recent years. If a child commits a theft the father has to insist on restitution and to give the child a severe beating as punishment.

To take even the smallest quantities of fruit or grain from other people's gardens or fields without obtaining permission is regarded as theft, and people would be ashamed of acting in this way, however hungry they might feel. A child who picked a fruit off a neighbour's tree would be severely punished.

There is no supernatural protection against thieves in the house

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685 or fields, though there is a feeling (not very strong) that *Thyak-dum*[9] will protect the houses to which he is attached. Lepcha economy is founded on the supposition that people do not steal and that no precautions are necessary against theft; consequently when thefts do occur they are particularly disquieting. There is no social apparatus for discovering the unwitnessed thief, or for forcing a confession; in such cases recourse may be had to supernatural powers, in the form of malicious sorcery. Malicious sorcery can in theory be directed against a personal enemy, but all the instances that I heard of were directed against unknown thieves.

754 756 793 Both lamas and Mun have traditions of malicious sorcery, of getting devils to plague a man or devour his soul; but Mun are considered to be less expert in the matter, taking a month while a lama should only take three days. The Mun are said to work by feeding a particular devil until it is contented and grateful, whereupon it will do whatever is asked. Lamas have two methods; the most learned can summon the victim's soul in the form of an insect and destroy it ritually, whereupon the victim dies at once, or they can summon a devil and hand over the victim to him. To kill a particular person by sorcery it is necessary to have some of their 'dirt'[10]—that is hair clippings, finger nails, or clothes that have been long worn; in the case of an unknown thief a portion of the stolen object, or of some other object which had been in long association with it is desirable, though not essential.

To kill the soul of a person an altar should be erected in the home in front of which is placed a plate covered with rice flour or very fine ashes; around this is arranged a fence of twelve pieces of wood inscribed with the victim's name arranged in pairs meeting at the top; inside the fence is the man's 'dirt' wrapped up in a piece of paper inscribed with his name. The lama then waves a stick with a piece of cloth on it and summons the victim's soul, which will presently arrive in the form of some winged insect; if the man is innocent the insect will not pass the fence but will go straight to the altar and worship there; if it settles on the plate it can be killed, whereupon the victim will immediately die.

To give a person over to a devil the proceeding is somewhat different. The victim's dirt is wrapped up in a piece of paper which

[9] See Chapter Two, pp. 74–75.

[10] The collective noun, used by Lepchas to indicate the exuviae, the portions of a victim's body or clothing which can be used for malicious sorcery, is *mari*, which means literally 'body dirt.'

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754 it to the second Dorjé Lapoon and requested him to sorcerise the
793 unknown thieves. Since the aggrieved party was his uncle, he agreed and started the necessary preparations. But while he was making the *cherkem* his elder brother, also a lama, arrived, saw what he was doing, and dissuaded him. Thereupon Pumri's husband took the meat to a Mun who has since died; he performed the sorcery and all the members of the thief's family (it is the family to which Kurma's second wife belonged) died one after the other; eight or nine are now dead and the family is almost extinct.

This is the last recorded case of sorcery being exercised in the district. The tradition is generally known about, and a certain awe of the three lamas who have this special knowledge is felt. But in Zongu there is no fear of one's 'dirt' being taken and used maliciously, and cut hair or nails are let lie where they fall; when they are in foreign parts however Lepchas say that they take care to burn or bury their 'dirt'. The Lepchas have also added an uncanonical rider to the Tibetan tradition of sorcery to the effect that the sorcery when it is directed against a particular person will only hurt that person if he or she is actually guilty; if he is not, the devil will return and destroy the sender. As opposed to the fear of poisoning the fear of sorcery is non-existent, and the subject is practically never mentioned in casual conversation.

684 Adultery, as will be seen later, is practically never taken any notice of; but if the instance should be particularly flagrant the aggrieved husband has two ways of punishing the lover; he can either beat the lover, thereby shaming him, or he can go and inform the Mandal. If he does this the Mandal will summon a meeting of the elders of the village and will then go to the house of the lover and summon him to confess; if he does so he has to pay to the husband either one chicken and a pig, or Rs. 5/–. If neither lover will confess the matter is abandoned. Discovered adultery is not a cause of enmity either between husband and wife or between husband and lover; only in the case of persistent adultery, and of the woman
586 showing a really marked preference for the lover, would the marriage be broken up.

685 The only other cause of dispute inside the village is the suspicion of boundary marks to fields having been moved. The only case recorded of this occurred fifteen years ago between an old man, since dead, and the father of Aga; this dispute, however, was patched up without calling in the Mandal, *youmi* and *gyapön* who would normally settle such disputes, if the first representations

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were ineffectual. In such cases the person who thinks he is wronged may curse his suspected aggressor by calling on *Rum Adum*, the Just God, to punish him by making him halt, maimed and blind. If the aggressor should be guilty he or his relations will die.

In the case of disputes between individuals a solemn oath may be made with religious ceremony, and also in the case of people who are suspected of evil doing without having any definite accusers; for instance, it would be open to Hlatam to make a solemn oath that she was not a poisoner; she has not done so. About twenty years ago, however, a man in a neighbouring village who was suspected of poisoning made the requisite ceremonies to swear that he was innocent of the victim's death;[11] his guilt is now believed to be firmly established, for he and all his kin subsequently died the same painful and lingering death. False swearing is for the Lepchas one of the most important and unsocial crimes; the false swearer and his family would be shunned. But there is more to it than that; a perjurer among one's ancestors constitutes an hereditary taint; all the descendants of such a one will die young; and therefore in arranging marriages care must be taken to see that the intended spouse does not come of such a family.[12]

Personal quarrels are felt to be the concern of everybody, and every effort is made to prevent them, or to stop them once they have broken out. Annually in the autumn an elaborate ceremony is held in the monastery to destroy the trinity of devils (enmity of speech, thought and deed) who cause quarrelling; and the first action in any public or private lamaist ceremony is to invoke and destroy Gett'r *moong*, the quarrel demon, to prevent disputes among the celebrants, and especially the noisy abuse which may occur when people have drunk too much. In the unhappy event of a quarrel taking place despite these precautions a mutual friend of the two disputants will give a feast for them to try and make up the trouble. Should the quarrel continue for no apparent reason

[11] See Chapter Fifteen, pp. 392–393.

[12] The heredities which render a person undesirable as a marriage partner are the following:—

(1) *Sanaar Tsuk git* an ancestor has been killed by a bear.
(2) *Doam git* an ancestor has died of leprosy.
(3) *Rumdong git* an ancestor has died of a violent jaundice.
(4) *Ryak mat git* an ancestor has committed perjury.
(5) *Arot moong git* an ancestor has died by violence.

All these disabilities are believed to be hereditary.

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636 over his district twice each year, when he assesses the tax to be paid on areas newly brought under cultivation. He also registers births and deaths. At the end of each tour he reports to Gangtok and renders his accounts in person. It may be noted in passing that local officials, whatever their rank, have at all times direct access to the Maharaja, with whom they may discuss their problems in person. The system is almost exactly the same as English feudalism at its best, and is free from the rigidity that makes British Indian administration so inelastic and impersonal.

The office of Mukhtiyar is not necessarily hereditary, since it can only be successfully filled by one who can at least read and write. The first Mukhtiyar of Jongu was a Lama of Lingtem, and when he died the office was offered to his son Tafoor. This man, who is also a Lama, is one of the most intelligent men in the village, and was one of our best informants. He felt, however, that he was unfitted for the post, since his education had been confined almost entirely to [789] classical Tibetan. Also he was the only man in the village who had learnt how to keep away rain; and because of this the whole village begged him to refuse the office. The present Mukhtiyar does not live in Lingtem, and we only met him once, when he came to pay his respects.

622 The post of village Mandal is hereditary. If he has no son, as is at present the case in Lingtem, the office will eventually devolve upon the man who marries his daughter; but when a man has no children some near paternal relative will usually be appointed. In addition to their work as tax-collectors 622 692 Mandals have authority to inflict fines up to thirty rupees, but a Mukhtiyar may order a fine of sixty. Any case requir- [685] ing a bigger fine than this has to be reported to the Durbar in Gangtok, which also settles cases in connection with misappropriation of land; but there have been no such cases in 622 Lingtem since many years. Mandals receive no pay from the state, but each household is required to give him three days' free labour (or three men for one day) a year. This is to compensate him for the neglect of his fields which would otherwise occur during his Absence on state business.